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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2255
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEHZS/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2187
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0491
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0198

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 001368

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR EAP/MLS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: HUMANR PREL PGOV PHUM VM
SUBJECT: SITREP: VIETNAMESE NEW PARTY DISSIDENT
DEVELOPMENTS

REF: A) HANOI 1338; B) HANOI 1320

HANOI 00001368 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Activists report that following the June 1 announcement of the re-establishment of the Democratic Party of Vietnam (DPV) police have harassed some of its members. The activists have publicly called for help. Other western diplomats are cautious about maintaining contact with the DPV. Meanwhile MFA officials suggest that the GVN believes it can live with any consequences of locking up the DPV leadership. We will deliver the message to the DPV leadership that while we might want Vietnamese law to change, until it does, they are subject to severe penalties for their political actions, and if they are arrested, there will be little that the U.S. Government can do about it. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On the morning of June 2, Nguyen Phuong Anh, founder of the "Bach Viet Democracy Party," and Dai Nguyen, advocate for the DPV, both sent broadcast e-mails to western participants in the ref B May 30 meeting. Anh stated that after the meeting, he was called in for questioning by the police (NFI). "They said many things terrible and non-acceptable about democratic people," he asserted, including "all democratic people are mad men." He also claimed the police told him that because Vietnam wants to join the WTO, the GVN instructed the police not to arrest advocates of democracy, but as soon as Vietnam has successfully joined, "all democratic people will be arrested at once." The police also threatened to arrest Anh if he did not comply with orders to report on DPV founder Hoang Minh Chinh and to report on his interactions with prominent Hanoi dissident Nguyen Khac Toan.

¶3. (SBU) Dai reported that at 6 p.m. on June 1 two security officers took him from his office to a police station where he was questioned about his relationship with Chinh. He was also asked if he organized the meeting with foreign diplomats (ref B). At the conclusion of the meeting, they informed him that his political activities are illegal. Dai announced in his e-mail that following this meeting he decided to cease cooperating with police and other GVN security officials because they hold that the only lawful political activities are those the constitution explicitly delineates, as opposed to his own interpretation that all

political activities not expressly prohibited by the constitution are legal. He concluded with a somewhat forlorn plea for help from foreign missions to prevent his incarceration in the coming days.

¶4. (SBU) On June 2, poloff discussed this turn of events with poloffs from the UK, French, Australian and EC embassies. The EC noted that it cannot intervene on behalf of a political party, but might raise Dai or Anh's cases as individual human rights concerns if either is arrested. In the meantime the EC will wait to see what happens next. The French poloff stated that his embassy feels burned by Dai and the DPV's internet press release of the ref B meeting and is therefore hesitant to get involved in either case. The UK poloff was more forward leaning, but also expressed concerns that Dai in particular should be told to limit his expectations of what foreign missions can do for him. The Australian noted that his embassy has not received official permission to meet with dissidents from the GOA and thus must avoid any kind of public role in either case or in the development of the DPV. Poloff suggested that western missions acknowledge receipt of both e-mails without comment to be followed up by a verbal message conveyed to Dai later in the week of June 5 by poloff on behalf of all missions stating that, while diplomats will continue to meet with dissidents, including DPV members, this should not be misconstrued as active support presaging intervention with the GVN. The others agreed.

¶5. (SBU) On June 5, Dai sent another e-mail claiming that over the weekend the GVN attempted to cut off all of his communications including internet and cell phones.

The MFA on the Potential Bilateral Impact of the DPV

HANOI 00001368 002.2 OF 002

¶6. (SBU) On June 3, poloff had a lengthy discussion with the Deputy Director General and a Section Chief of the Americas Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the potential effect on the U.S.-Vietnam bilateral relationship of this new political party. The MFA officers said that in recent weeks there has been an intensifying debate within the GVN (and even within the MFA) regarding the pace and extent of the U.S.-Vietnam bilateral relationship. "Some people think we are moving too far too fast with the United States and upsetting the balance between the United States and China," the Section Chief said. "They think we should slow down and think a bit to make sure Vietnam is going in the right direction." The other side, according to the DDG, feels that Vietnam should take what it can get (particularly in the realms of ODA and trade) now when things are going smoothly, recognizing that eventually something will happen to slow the pace of the relationship anyway.

¶7. (SBU) The MFA officers said that the MFA and the GVN are convinced that the relationship could survive the kind of "hiccup" that would result if Vietnam takes strong action against the DPV, such as imprisoning its leaders. Poloff suggested that such an action would inflame human rights activists with a potentially negative impact on the PNTR vote in the U.S. Congress, which would in turn antagonize prickly nationalists in Vietnam. "It wouldn't stop PNTR," the Section Chief said confidently, "though maybe there would be conditions attached to the PNTR vote - and we could deal with that."

Comment

¶8. (SBU) The MFA officials we talked to June 3 were unusually confident (without the usual caveats and disclaimers characteristic of MFA pronouncements), and the ease with which they discussed the GVN position on this suggested that they had recently participated in (or

listened in on) an internal policy discussion on the subject. Taken at face value, their comments suggest that the GVN is ready to lock up the DPV leadership, despite what the dissidents reported about the police waiting until after Vietnam's WTO entry. We will deliver the message to the DPV leadership that while we might want Vietnamese law to change, until it does, they are subject to severe penalties for their political actions, and if they are arrested, there will be little that the U.S. Government can do about it.

MARINE